

/58 cont. /

731 donkey is brought, which they cover with a white sheet and
789 put the doll on it. One of the girls takes the donkey by the
rein, while two others support the doll, and they set out for
the place where the raft was made. The other girls ac-
company the procession on both sides, singing "dziva dziva
[639] dzvaril kva kva mykryld aphsh-akh ipha did shivait dzy
khychik, dzy khuchik," which means, "To get water, water!
To get rainwater; a red daisy! Son of the Lord, we thirst
for a little water, a little water!" When they come to the
river, they take the doll from the donkey, put it on the raft,
and, setting the straw afire, let it float downstream; they
then try to chase the donkey into the water, which, of course,
requires no small effort. At last the donkey is dragged into
the river, and, emerging on the opposite bank, he begins
[825] to bray, which is considered the surest sign of forthcoming
rain. If, however, the donkey fails to bray, the same cere-
mony is repeated anew on the following day or the next
day after that.

25.

Saints

776 Independent of the general worship of all the deities dis-
778 cussed above, the inhabitants of the villages of Lykhny,

• [184] Lzaa, and Ilori are under the protection of saints, to whom
the churches erected in those villages are dedicated; or,
more correctly, who are under the protection of the churches
themselves. In Lykhny each family invokes the protection
of Anan-Lykhnykh (the Virgin Mother of Lykhny), in Lzaa,
of Anan-Lzaanykh (the Virgin Mother of Lzaa, i. e., the
cathedral of Pitsunda dedicated to the Holy Virgin), in Ilori,
of Tsminda Giorgi (the cathedral of St. George). To invoke
782 their protection, sacrifices must be offered, which are, in
[796] fact, brought by each family once a year on a Sunday
evening.

[231] - On the day set aside for the offering, the best year-old

[12] already collected for the writing of a full-size monograph dealing with the religious beliefs and customs of the K'art's, Ibers, and Svans. However, after some reflection I decided that the time was not ripe for such a task as some necessary data were lacking and I therefore decided to publish only the notes. Here and there, however, I have not been able to restrain myself from touching upon certain considerations and inquiries belonging to the larger plane, and these have overflowed in the form of footnotes.

777 The founders of Christianity, realizing that it was not so easy after all to eradicate from the consciousness of the majority of the population religious beliefs and rites observed for thousands of years, endeavoured to transform them, by wrapping them up in their own clothing and so adapting them to the Christian feasts and saints; thus they established their own annual festivals. Wherever possible [28] I have followed in my account the established order of church festivals. 796

I should further point out that all the material herein described [101] was collected in one village only, namely, Adzvibzha, in southern Abkhasia (the province of Abzhua), which, according both to Georgian [48] and foreign (for instance, of the missionary A. Lambert's) historical sources constituted until the second half of the seventeenth century, part of Megrelia. This accounts for the fact that the Megrelian influence is so strongly noticeable. I think it is quite possible that some of the beliefs herein described may be capable of a different interpretation [184] in Northern Abkhasia.

776 I begin my notes with Ayt'ar. In the first place, however, it will be expedient to explain my views on the chief deity antswa,* God.

[192] antswa (ratswa)—"many," which together denote "many mothers" or simply "mothers"; the word is thus in the plural form.¹ "In a formal or grammatical sense," says Dcharaia, "it is not an error; only the word 'mother' forms in the plural antswa and 'God'—antswa, i.e. the difference is in the accent. But in colloquial speech both words,

104 * The underlined tsw is a trigraph representing a sound uttered with one articulative effort or breath impulse, of which the digraph "ts" represents the front lingual affricate equivalent to German "s" (Zeit, time), and the labial semi-vowel "w", the labialization of the preceding "ts". "tsw" thus represents a labialized variety of "ts". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet* (in Russian), Leningrad, 1928, p. 31. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

¹ It would be premature at this stage to enter into the question of the identification of the conception "god", in Abkhasian, with "mother", and any attempt to give a morphological explanation of the form, which is incontestably the plural in -tswa, with the aid of the Abkhasian word ratswa would be superfluous (see N. Marr, *Definition of the Language of the Second Category of the Achaemenian Cuneiform Inscriptions* (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, St. Petersburg, 1915, 182. See also his *On the Origin of the Name Anapa* (in Russian). It is the usual linguistic method of the Abkhasians to interpret everything, even suffixes, such as the plural termination -tswa in the above instance, by means of the Abkhasian speech, with the aid of the Abkhasian words that survive to this day. [Note by the Editor of the *Kristianski Vostok*.]

776 who transgress against him. In order to avoid incurring the anger of
 1821 this god, an Abkhaz will not draw water or wash himself when the
 515 rainbow is in the sky, and is generally careful about the use of water.
 755 Like any other god, *Atswaga* may bestow the "warmth of his eyes and his heart", in return for offerings and prayers. Whoever is affected by his wrath, grows icteritious, emaciated, to save his life he must, at the direction of the sorceresses, make the following offering to the rainbow god:—

On one of the Thursdays¹ the old ("pure") women take the sick person to the river, pass (Geo. *shemoavleben*) around his head 4-5 yards of variegated chintz, and pray: "The great god! Acknowledging his transgressions this sick person (the name is mentioned) has appeared before thee, and humbly entreats thee to accept this chintz as a pledge that he will perform the established offering at the proper time, at the direction of the sorceresses!"

On the following Thursday he is taken again to the same river and place. Usually three women say the prayer, but there may be seven. Men, with the exception of the patient, are not allowed to be present at this ceremony. The sick person is dressed entirely in white. The eldest woman² kills a capon and a hen; women carry out all the duties, preparing *ashwamkyd'*, "ghomi" (millet pudding), *akwakwâr*, and *atcha-gvazdl* (Geo. *ghvezeli*, an oblong bread), of each of which there must be seven of the usual, and seven of the very small size. All these are placed on *ashwamkyd'*, on which also burn seven wax candles. The prayer is said by the eldest woman. The patient kneels in front of the offering; he is taken home immediately the ceremony is over, and he must not look back. The seven small *akwakwâr*, *atcha-gvazdl*, and seven small portions of *ghomi* (*abds't'a*—millet porridge), are thrown into the water; they represent the share of the female slaves (*ash'ap'hwës*) of the rainbow god. Everything else is consumed by the women themselves; the remains being thrown into the river, for nothing must be taken home.

Muhammadans must also burn candles at this offering. The candles are fixed on a kind of hoop made of grape vine. At the end of the ceremony the hoop with the burning candles is thrown into the river.

It should be noted that in some parts of the country this god is called *Atswaga-ëlis* (the Rainbow-Elijah). So at least he was called, according to the testimony of D. I. Gulia, by Javaz, the famous woman suppliant.

¹ Thursday in Megrelian is *tsashhha*, the day of the sky. It is noteworthy that the Abkhazians perform usually on the day of the sky, the majority of rites that are seemingly connected with the sky, as in the case given.

² The Abkhazian women kill animals only on occasions of certain offerings.